

P 122035Z NOV 02
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2324
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
DIA WASHDC
DIRONDCP WASHDC
JOINT STAFF WASHDC
NSC WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL

UNCLAS BOGOTA 010338

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PREL PTER CO
SUBJECT: FARC KIDNAPS PRESIDENT OF LATIN AMERICAN BISHOPS
CONFERENCE

REF: A. BOGOTA 9881
B. BOGOTA 9640

¶1. (U) ON NOVEMBER 11, THE PRESIDENT OF THE LATIN AMERICAN BISHOPS CONFERENCE (CELAM) AND BISHOP OF ZIPAQUIRA, JORGE ENRIQUE JIMENEZ, WAS KIDNAPPED IN A RURAL AREA NEAR PACHO, CUNDINAMARCA. TWO ARMED MEN KIDNAPPED THE BISHOP ALONG WITH A PARISH PRIEST. THE 60 YEAR-OLD JIMENEZ WAS TRAVELING TO SAN ANTONIO DE AGUILERA TO PRESIDE OVER A CONFIRMATION CEREMONY. ARMY 13TH BRIGADE COMMANDER GENERAL CARLOS ALBERTO OSPINA ATTRIBUTED THE KIDNAPPING TO THE FARC. THE FARC'S 22ND FRONT OPERATES IN THE AREA WHERE THE BISHOP WAS ABDUCTED.

¶2. (U) THIS IS THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF TERRORIST ATTACKS BY THE FARC (AS WELL AS THE ELN) AGAINST ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS AND PRIESTS. IN MARCH, THE ARCHBISHOP OF CALI, ISAIAS DUARTE CANCINO, WAS ASSASSINATED. MORE RECENTLY, IN OCTOBER, THE FARC GUNNED DOWN A PARISH PRIEST AS HE WAS LEAVING HIS RESIDENCE IN CHALAN, SUCRE (REF B).

¶3. (U) THE FARC HAS BEEN CARRYING OUT A KIDNAPPING CAMPAIGN AGAINST RELIGIOUS AND GOVERNMENT FIGURES IN AN ATTEMPT TO PRESSURE THE URIBE ADMINISTRATION TO EXCHANGE THEM FOR CONVICTED FARC PRISONERS. NGO'S AND FAMILY MEMBERS OF KIDNAP VICTIMS HAVE FLOATED SEVERAL EXCHANGE PROPOSALS. WILLIAM VELEZ, PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, ALSO HAS A PROPOSAL FOR A ONE-TIME EXCHANGE. THE FARC PRISONERS WOULD BE SENT TO A THIRD COUNTRY AND NOT BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO COLOMBIA.

¶4. (U) COMMENT: BY FOCUSING ON ELITE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LEADERS, THE FARC IS TRYING TO INCREASE THE PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT. THERE HAVE BEEN INDICATIONS IN THE PRESS THAT THE URIBE ADMINISTRATION IS CONSIDERING THE VELEZ PROPOSAL (REF A). END COMMENT.

PATTERSON

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